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WELLINGTON (SOMERSET)
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

For 1908.

BY DR. J. MEREDITH

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

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Annual Report for 1908,

By DR. J. MEREDITH.

Medical Officer of Health.

To the Chairman of the Council of the Wellington (Somerset) Urban Sanitary District.

4th February, 1909.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report respecting the sanitary condition and the health of the inhabitants of the Urban Sanitary District of Wellington, Somerset, for the year 1908.

Population.—The population, according to the 1891 Census—6,808 ; 1901 Census—7,283 ; estimated to end of June, 1908—7,649. A qualifying note should be entered here, to the effect that on an average, judging from census returns, about 25 persons leave the district each year, who never return to reside. I do not think it expedient to take this into calculation in preparing each year's annual return—preferring rather to leave it to the Census enumeration for correction.

Geology.—The Topographical and Geological characters of the district have been fully given in former reports.

Occupation.—There has been no material change in the general industry of the district, or its employments. There has been no poverty calling for special notice.

Vagrants.—The number of vagrants who availed themselves of the Union Casual ward, was 1,621 : being 1,523 males, 134 females, and 64 children, nine more than in 1907. The total was much less than it used to be a few years ago, due, probably, to the tramps being compelled to do more work than they used to do. Nevertheless, a great number of these people, who, practically, are best described as unemployable, pass through the district every year ; many of them shelter at the Poole Kilns, and other places. They have not been the means of importing any infectious illness into the town or district.

Rainfall.—The rainfall of the year has been over 5 inches below average, it amounted only to 25·26 inches. On the 19th of October over 2 inches fell in a short space of time. Maximum temperature in screen, 85 degrees occurred on the 4th of July, and the minimum 19 degrees on the 11th of January.

Water Supply.—The water supply of the town has been ample and of the best quality. The Council's arrangements at Westford for the supply proved in every way satisfactory. All the new houses that are built are supplied with the town water.

Sewage.—The Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector reports that the sewage works are completed, and in good working order, and no further observation now appears called for. The Inspector further states, in reference to nuisances and defects abated, that 21 drains were dealt with and 33 water fittings. Two instances of persons keeping pigs, in such a manner as to be a nuisance, and likely to affect health injuriously, were attended to, and another, where fowls were found in an insanitary condition and a peril to healthy living. Five cases of over-crowding were disposed of, and so were ten complaints of nuisances, arising from dirty and dilapidated dwellings. One smoke nuisance had to be dealt with, and two others arising from accumulation of stable manure. The bakeries and slaughter houses were inspected as usual, and the general condition of things was found satisfactory, but there was one case where the fasting pen, connected with a slaughter house, was found in a filthy condition. A couple of cowsheds were found dirty and complained of. Three instances of insufficient w.c. accommodation were found and received prompt attention.

New Houses.—The Surveyor tells me that 15 new houses of about £14 rental : 2 of about £25 ; and 1 of about £30 rental have been erected in the town during the last year. Extensive additions have been made at the County School, and at Tonedale factory as well. Thus the building trade, as far as the small town of Wellington is concerned, has not suffered materially from depression.

Scavenging.—The scavenging of the town has been carried on with regularity as during former years.

Dairies.—The dairies and cowsheds of the district have been inspected by the Sanitary Inspector. The cows, as stated in former reports, are very seldom kept in sheds, and I have not heard of any illness among them during the year.

Schools.—As on former occasions, I repeatedly visited the elementary schools of the district, and have taken note of the appearance and sanitary condition of the pupils as well as of the premises. In my report to the Council for October last, I stated that in two of the schools inspected, there were reasons for special remarks. The pupils calling for these, were the victims of blamable neglect, or ignorance on the part of those having the care of them. The teachers are doing all they can to enforce cleanliness in the fullest meaning of the word, but complain that it is an uphill work to do so in few cases where parents are indifferent. It cannot be too frequently or too strongly urged that a dirty child in a class is a source of danger to other children as well as to itself. There can be no good reason why any child should be in an objectionable state, either as to its clothing or person, when sent to school. Excepting in these very few instances, which have been greatly improved since, there was every reason to feel pleased with the appearances of the pupils, telling as they did of healthy homes and good care. I should add that at Courtland Road schools, extensive alterations and additions have been carried out, and largely in the interest of sanitation. There was no reason for closing schools during 1908. No illness in epidemic form occurred.

Factories and Workshops.—There is nothing to report in respect to factories, workshops, and workplaces deserving of special notice. I have inspected most of them during the year and found all satisfactory. A list of out-works has been sent me as in former years. The dwellings of nearly all these were visited and information received regarding the rest. All dealt directly with the manufacturers and in no case is an intermediary employed.

Infectious Diseases.—Four cases of infectious diseases have been notified during the year—two of scarlet fever of mild form, not connected with one another. The first occurred in February and the second in September. The rest were cases of facial erysipelas. In one of these the illness supervened on pulmonary disease in an elderly person, who did not recover; there was nothing insanitary about the dwelling that could be held to account for the illness.

Births.—There were 171 births during the year; only six of them were illegitimate. There has been no death among these last during the period. Sixteen of the others died, causing a death rate of 22·4 per thousand of the population and 93·6 per thousand births. This rate is high, but lower than the average of the county, as well as that of the country generally, and a little less than the Wellington average during the last 10 years; but there is room still in a few houses for a better order of sanitation and more intelligent motherly care connected with infants.

Deaths.—There were 116 deaths in the district during last year. Three of these, as will be seen from Table IV. are due to influenza, and three more from enteritis. Pulmonary phthisis as a cause of death does not as yet show any appreciable signs of diminution in our midst. It caused 8 deaths last year; while three more are ascribed to other forms of tuberculosis. The same may be said of cancer; in one form or another, it caused eight deaths. Bronchitis and inflammation of the lungs caused 19 deaths. Three deaths are entered against alcoholism. Six out of the sixteen infants who died under one year of age, died owing to prematurity of birth—only surviving their births by a very short period of time.

Under the heading “Diseases and Accidents of Parturition,” two deaths are entered, one was the result of hæmorrhage, and the other of general blood poisoning, owing to having lived under insanitary conditions. Heart disorders and failures account for 24 deaths and two are set down to accidents. The remaining 35 are such as call for special observation. Out of the total number, 27 deaths occurred in the Union Workhouse, or Cottage Hospital. Ten of these were non-residents in the district. Deducting these from the total number of deaths, it gives an average death rate of 15 per thousand. This no doubt would be slightly affected if we were in a position to give the number of Wellington residents who die in places outside the district.

JOHN MEREDITH, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

